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REVIEW OF SCHOULER'S HISTORY OF UNITED STATES

It was considerably more than thirty years ago that Mr. Schouler began writing his history, a task which is now completed, volume VII having just appeared from the press. The scholarly undertaking which this author set himself to complete has occupied him for a period during which there has been unusual activity in history writing all over the country. Special investigations, monographs, reports, and local studies have appeared each year in ever-increasing volume. The periodical literature alone, in the field of history, has so extended its range as to cover minutely the most varied fields of research. The publications of numerous local or national organizations have made universally accessible an increasing number of useful manuscripts and official documents. Thus the entire field of the historical student has been altered while his equipment and the general efficiency of the means at his disposal have both been markedly improved. Coördinate studies in allied subjects have also added much to widen the horizon line of the historian and to counteract the narrowing effect of over-specialization. It has thus come about that the task of writing a general history of our country which should be authoritative and at the same time complete has grown increasingly difficult since Mr. Schouler essayed his initial volume. The specialist has invaded the field of history as he has every other; and, as a consequence, general history of anything like the scholarly type appeals to the public taste less and less each year. The seven volumes of Schouler's *History of United States* are no exception to this rule. They are not the work of a mere compiler nor have they been con-

tracted for by the publisher, as have so many other pretentious works, at so many pages per week or month. Yet they do not seem to be any more attractive to the general reader than they are to the specialist. As works of reference, however, they fill an indispensable place, and they possess certain definite qualities which stamp them as having a value peculiarly their own. The present series was designed originally, the author tells us, to present the national development from the close of the Revolutionary War to the year 1831. In carrying out this plan there has been an evident purpose to subordinate the purely military to the civil and political history and to present in a fairly uninterrupted narrative the salient points in our history. To obtain this result, the author has subordinated all other considerations and has been successful in holding his course to the desired goal.

Certain very desirable qualities in a good historian are plainly manifested throughout the work. One cannot but be struck by the evident fairness and impartiality of the author. There is little of special pleading or of emotional appeal in the entire work. In view of the conspicuous failure along this particular line among historians generally, our author is to be congratulated upon his success in maintaining so high a standard of excellence throughout his long and arduous task. Again, the history as a whole shows unmistakable evidence of the painstaking labor of years, which has been bestowed upon it. There is no parade of mere erudition, however, but at every point there is evidence of careful preparation and research. In this respect the entire work is a monument to the diligence, the skill, and the high scholarship of the author.

In passing judgment upon the work of an historical scholar whose reputation is so well established and whose works are so universally used, there is the temptation to overlook faults and to remain silent upon questions that might seem to cast discredit upon an author so widely and so favorably known. Nevertheless, the candor and frankness of the author in dealing with the most intricate questions and in handling matters upon which there has been much rancorous debate furnishes, as it were, a standard of criticism which can be applied with the same impartiality to his own work.

In organizing the great mass of historical material covered

by his seven volumes the author has adopted a uniform method for its discussion and presentation. This method, which he follows quite invariably from the year 1789, is purely chronological and is based first on the presidential administrations, which furnish his chapter divisions, and second on the various congresses, which supply the sections of each chapter. So closely are these divisions and subdivisions followed that in the first five volumes there are only three exceptions to this rule; these are the sections devoted to the topics of the United States of America in 1809, the Mexican War, and the United States in 1831.

The advantages of this method of presentation are apparent enough. The average reader can easily locate events and names, and he finds the narrative simple in style and easy to understand. In this respect this particular work has been of real service in popularizing our history, and in its procedure it follows the older dynastic treatment of European history. On the other hand the obvious disadvantages of mere chronology occur at once to any student of history and the limitations of the method are very pronounced.

In the first three volumes of this series which cover the period up to 1831, several obvious defects of the chronological method become apparent upon even a casual examination. It is manifestly impossible to begin a national history at any set date and not include in some fashion the events and conditions in the preceding period. For illustration, our historian's treatment of slavery after 1783 is very decidedly lacking in background and in substantial content because he has failed to take into account the colonial phase of slavery. During this period it was distinctly a nationalizing factor among the colonies, since it brought the southern colonies into an advanced stage of agriculture in a relatively short time, while for New England the African slave trade was a dominating element in the industrial advance that speedily made her the successful rival and competitor of England herself. This national stage in the history of the institution of slavery is especially significant in view of the transformation which was shortly after 1783 to make it a purely sectional issue. The passing of slavery into its sectional phase explains the elimination of the South from national leadership

after the Virginia regency passed away, and it partly accounts, also, for Calhoun's swift descent into relative insignificance. The non-national character of slavery also helps to account for the early disappearance of Webster, Benton, Cass, and Douglas from the field of national politics, to say nothing of a host of others, more or less prominent in public affairs. It is much to be regretted that this purely chronological treatment of our national history should have interfered with a more adequate presentation of this important subject and a discussion of the larger aspects of its relation to our national development.

Similarly, the discussion of the rise of the new West is exceedingly inadequate as it is presented in the administration of John Quincy Adams, because no historical background has been presented and the early connections with colonial life have been wholly omitted. The West as a nineteenth-century section needs to be connected with the colonial West, that is, with the Appalachian area. This peculiarly distinctive region bred the first true Americans who, owning no state or colonial allegiance, developed that race of hardy and self-sufficing frontiersmen whose descendants conquered the Mississippi Valley for the infant nation. Nor is it possible to understand Virginia's early leadership unless we take into account her intimate connection with this same Appalachian area and her consequent share in opening the West to settlement. No mere narrative of events can possibly present a satisfactory picture of so important a transformation period in our national progress. In the rise of the West, also, is involved a series of complex relations that defies conventional chronology. The Indian question, foreign immigration, western land sales, road and canal building, the tariff — all these have a share in the composite result and demand fuller discussion than our author has given them.

But aside from this serious defect which is to be noted in the earlier volumes of the series, there is another which runs throughout and very materially limits the usefulness of the author's work. Nowhere does he present in a single chapter a concise and systematic résumé of a single one of the more important topics which appear in one phase or the other throughout his narrative. There is nowhere to be found such discussion, for example, of the federal bank, or tariff, or of the general indus-

trial advance. While it is necessary, to be sure, that the main trend of government action and policy be followed, yet there are so many aspects of national development that a single method of presentation falls far short of sufficiently meeting the ordinary needs of readers and students. There should be a chapter devoted to the epoch-making work of John Marshall and the federal supreme court. Certainly this is more than a mere detail in the administrations of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. The constitutional foundations of our national government were laid by Marshall and his colleagues during thirty years of intense activity and growth throughout the country, and the work they were doing was not appreciated or even understood by their contemporaries. It is the province of the historian, however, to rescue their labor from the obscurity that has so long concealed it and to place it where its full meaning may be apprehended by the public. No chronology can at all give the significance of the supreme court decisions in the period of the South Carolina state rights controversy and in the decisive conflict between Webster and his two opponents. Then, too, the author's treatment of the Hayne-Webster debate is unsatisfactory. He has allowed the great constitutional arguments on each side to be blurred by the mere rhetoric in the respective speeches. Had this famous bit of history been considered in a distinct chapter, devoted to the entire subject of constitutional interpretation, of which it was a part, a very different impression would have been produced than now remains with the reader.

Among the many subjects for discussion which run continuously throughout the history, presenting a great variety of phases and transformations, one of the most important is that of political parties and their contests for supremacy. On the whole the presentation of this subject is rather disappointing than otherwise and the author has apparently failed to utilize this field of inquiry to the best advantage; and he has, therefore, been unable to solve many perplexing problems and to interpret many of the most significant aspects of our history. The appearance of two new political parties separating on the issues arising from the controversy over the alien and sedition laws of 1797-1798 seems to have been quite overlooked. Neither are the statesmanlike qualities of Jefferson's leadership at this critical

time recognized by our author, whose words describing him are far from doing justice to his place in the history of the time: "The clear-eyed leader of the Democracy, cool, subtle, persevering and insinuating" (1:485). Nor can we wholly agree with Schouler when he says of the defeated Federalists in 1800: "No political party in a time of popular commotion could ever boast in America a more splendid body of voters; social rank, talent, wealth, learning, supported Federalism, in New England more especially" (1:513). In view of the fact that in the presidential election to which he refers the eastern third of Massachusetts voted for Jefferson by a considerable majority and that the interior and poorer part of the state supported Adams, the Federalist party seems to have lost its early pretensions and to have become a provincial party controlled by factions and narrow-minded voters quite out of the main current of affairs. In the period subsequent to the War of 1812, we fail to note any mention of the new national issues of bank, tariff, and internal improvements as completing the disruption of parties and preventing the formation of new party groupings until after the election of Adams in 1824. The conventional chronology used throughout the history seems to have prevented the very desirable massing of facts for the presentation of general conclusions on party development. This is probably why the author fails so entirely to distinguish the issue upon which Jackson won his victory over Clay and Adams in 1829. This, however, can hardly explain why he gives us no hint of the tremendous significance of the rise to power of the Democratic party, an event that marks the appearance of new national ideals supported by the will of an entire nation. The author's sketch of John Quincy Adams is admirably done and leaves nothing to be desired. His colleague, Clay, is not so well portrayed and we are left in doubt as to his strength of will as well as of his intellectual grasp of the principal measures upon which he discoursed so eloquently. Politically Jackson comes off rather badly at the hands of our historian, who views him as a passing phenomenon, picturesque, indeed, and extremely characteristic of certain phases of American life. Besides holding him responsible for having debauched the public service, he insists that respect for law and order steadily declined during his administrations.

“Factions and mob violence were always on the increase; and though the principles of national institutions and of fundamental authority were discussed as never before nor since, there never was a time short of civil war when lawlessness gained so nearly the upper hand in the community” (4:276).

It is very evident that this view is purely sectional and takes into account only that part of the nation living east of the Alleghenies. The new national ideal of popular rule made short work of the pretensions of the ruling clique that had up to this time practically named all of the presidents since the election of 1800. Jackson was chosen by the whole nation to “clean house” after the long rule of the “best,” and he did his work thoroughly if ruthlessly. The old régime was swept away completely it is true, but it is quite beside the mark to urge the charge that public service was thereby debauched. That point of view has long since lost its force and the public men of the time soon abandoned this untenable position and addressed themselves to the task of removing public appointment from politics by the introduction of civil service. To hold Jackson responsible for the political earthquake that overturned the ruling oligarchy and brought on a long period of confusion, before a readjustment could be made, is to refuse to recognize the far-reaching nature of the change which Jackson championed, and it suggests a doubt as to the correctness of the author’s judgment of this entire epoch. The West was undoubtedly the most truly national of all sections in 1830, and the entrance of its citizens into national politics under Jackson’s leadership necessarily gave a rude shock to the sectional ideas and aims of all other portions of the nation. It is perhaps the most serious defect in the work we are considering that the author has given so little consideration to the evolution and the point of view of that portion of the American people living west of the Alleghenies and beyond the Mississippi.

As already indicated, the division of the entire field into sections devoted to presidential administrations and sessions of Congress is in many ways advantageous and gives the whole presentation a unity and simplicity which is very desirable if it can be attained without too much sacrifice. Some of the principal defects in this method of procedure have already been

pointed out. There are many others which, though not so fundamental, nevertheless interrupt the flow of the narrative and interfere with the clearness of the impression the author wishes to convey. In his handling of the Missouri compromise there is a fair illustration of such a minor defect. The general topic is in its correct chronological position but the subject matter is scattered through widely separated pages. For instance, the admission of the free and slave states of Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, and Alabama, and the maintenance of the equilibrium in the senate is properly given first as antecedent to the controversy over the admission of Missouri. But instead of following this up with an account of the compromise struggle, there follow twenty pages of miscellaneous matter on such topics as war claims, presidential election, Revolutionary pensions, suspension of specie payments, and foreign diplomacy. Next appears a page on the slave trade but again intervenes the extraneous subjects of the Florida treaty, the assembling of the Sixteenth Congress and the rebuilding of the two wings of the capitol, some four pages in all. Again the slavery question is broached but only in a very general way. The American Colonization Society is discussed, the founding of Liberia is dwelt upon at some length, as well as the question of fugitive slaves. Having at length arrived by this devious route at the actual discussion of the Missouri compromise, twenty-six pages are given over to the consideration of the matter. However, the final stage of the controversy over the Missouri constitution does not follow in its logical place but is taken up only after a six-page digression upon tariff debates, the tenure of office act, the Spanish and the Florida treaty, and the death of George III. In spite of all predilection in favor of the author, one cannot but feel it to be a frivolous treatment of a serious subject to close this discussion as our author does: "With this last maternal shake of a saucy daughter who had never been brought up to respect the rights of black men, and must needs, when full grown, go her own way . . . , our second antislavery movement terminates, enough having been accomplished, as in 1807, to remove the main basis of agitation. . . . To deplore, to forget, to lull the painful question to sleep whenever it cried out, was the duty of good citizens; and as good citizens many of our best

and purest made this the rule of their lives. . . Like the prince of the Arabian tale, half human and half marble, the American people were under the spell of an enchantment which the congested arteries refused to expel; and covering the unwholesome body with rich robes of purple, they ruled, strong still in youth, though death were dragging at the vitals'' (3:187-189). We are told nothing of the advantages gained by the northern opponents of slavery extension in thus establishing the precedent of congressional intervention at every future step in the direction of slave expansion. Nor are we told of the disproportionate size of the territory which for the future was to be closed to slavery and was destined to be free when westward growth should create new territories and states beyond the Mississippi.

In one other respect the conventional chronology so closely followed in the presentation of historical material has led the author unconsciously to commit errors of judgment which are inadmissible. In assigning space to each of the numerous sub-topics in his narrative, he has frequently made relatively insignificant matters assume undue prominence, while at the same time topics of first rank are dismissed with scant notice. It is hardly fair for instance to limit the discussion of the Hayne-Webster debate to five pages while a gossip account of the Eaton scandal at Washington is made to cover four pages (3:487-498). In one of the earlier chapters the petty details of executive etiquette and the social affairs of the president's official family in New York occupy relatively the same space that is devoted to the consideration of the important subjects of our territorial possessions and our territorial policy (1:108-129). The national importance of the visit of Kossuth to United States and that of the Lincoln-Douglas debates will hardly be judged to stand in the proportion of four to six, which is the relative page space devoted to these two topics (5:226, 406). It is needless to multiply examples. The natural result of depending upon a purely chronological arrangement of material is to reduce to a common value all the elements of the historical period under discussion. It is only when mere formal order is ignored and the details of a given problem are considered as a whole that their relative values can be properly gauged.

The closing volumes of the series are quite distinct from the earlier ones both in form and content. The volume on the Civil War is filled with material arranged more or less chronologically but otherwise wholly without order. The fundamental causes of the war are nowhere adequately set forth but they are frequently hinted at in a disjointed and fragmentary manner. For instance, on page 36 we find the caption, "Enthusiasm for secession in the southern states"; on page 50, "Antagonism of slave and free labor systems"; and on page 60, "Enthusiasm for slavery and southern homogeneousness." These headings represent isolated topics separated by alien and unrelated materials. On pages 318-320 we find such topics as these presented: "fatalism of slaveholders; sectional misconceptions"; "southern aspects; absence of luxury; few large centres." One fails to discover order or plan here, it is rather a mere helter-skelter presentation of the subjects in somewhat the fashion that they crowded upon the public attention at the time the events occurred. This is not history; it is historical panorama, where all manner of things, those trivial, or purely routine, and those of first-rate importance jostle each other on and off the stage. It leaves the reader bewildered and out of patience to follow the author through the confusing paraphernalia of his chapters and topics, and to come at the last to nothing really worth while either in broad summary or suggestive conclusion. There is a disappointing absence of that matured judgment of men and affairs and the impartial weighing of causes and results which we have a right to expect from the ripe scholarship and long experience such as is possessed by the author. Even the very important foreign complications during the war are quite lacking in coherence. They appear fragmentarily amid the miscellaneous tangle of battles, administrative appointments and plans of campaigns, until all sequence disappears and their vital significance in the history of the war is wholly lost sight of. The last volume of the series deals with that momentous period of our history which immediately follows the Civil War. An impartial historian, trained in the most approved methods of research and with the experience gained from writing more than a century of our national history would naturally be expected to devote the major part of his closing volume to review and retro-

spect, giving his readers the benefit of his long and familiar acquaintance with the minutiae of a century of development. If heretofore he had dealt too exclusively with the little and the obscure, in the final volume of the series he would necessarily feel compelled to present the sum total in generalization and review, in order that the plan and movement of the national growth might appear in all its entirety. More important still it would be his duty and his privilege to discover and make known those vast underground forces already at work, which have since so remarkably transformed the social and political, the religious and the educational point of view, and which have plunged us into the midst of a wholly new world, in which the old standards and sanctions have been almost wholly abandoned or replaced. But the reader finds no such satisfying content in this last contribution of our historian. Nearly one half of the entire volume is given over to a defense of President Johnson and to a criticism of his detractors and enemies. The matter which is presented is admirably adapted to a series of magazine articles or a monograph but is wholly out of place in a national history. He might have discussed quite as appropriately railroad building in the West, the position of the Negro in the state of South Carolina, the Indian question in the new territories, or some one of twenty other similar phases of our national affairs. In somewhat similar fashion the period of Grant's administration is given almost exclusively from the outlook which might be obtained from the steps of the federal capitol or the front door of the White House. It is quite impossible to take such a work seriously at all as representing even in part the crowded and tempestuous life of a great nation.

Three years after Schouler finished the initial volume of his history, there appeared the first volume of McMaster's *History of the People of the United States*. The two histories cover practically the same period and are not unlike in the manner of their presentation. Schouler's work is more chronological in the arrangement of its material while McMaster's history not uncommonly presents a strange conglomerate of odds and ends from every quarter of the country under a title that carries no suggestion of the real contents of the chapter. For instance one chapter of some forty pages in length and having for its title

“Politics at Home and Abroad” contains a typical range of topics. Here in a short compass McMaster discusses the Whig victory in New York, attacks on Negroes in Philadelphia, anti-Catholic feeling in Boston, debate on Benton’s expunging resolution, French spoliation claims, the boundary contest between Ohio and Michigan, the Mormons in Missouri and the war between Texas and Mexico. Both of these historians seem to follow a similar plan for bringing together the most diverse materials under a single title. Neither of them gives a serious treatment to matters western, especially west of the Mississippi River. The great bulk of their material throughout has reference to occurrences east of the Mississippi or Alleghenies. Outside of Texas and California, there does not seem to be any careful and discriminating discussion of a frontier western state or section in the pages of either historian. Though the material is better arranged in Schouler’s history, yet McMaster’s has the greater volume of matter. In fact so voluminous is the newspaper material in the latter work, and so loosely is it handled that one is often at a loss to distinguish the quotations from the author’s own comments. From the point of view of the future writers of history, there is very little in either of these works which can assist the beginner, either in a petty detail like footnotes or in the more serious matters of style, point of view, and subject matter. There is unquestionably a vast amount of material for history in these volumes but it has yet to be organized and made to yield its real meaning as interpreting our history.

The most serious criticism of all is one that does not lie against these historians any more than the majority of those who are contributing to our historical literature. Just now the most important activity in which historical societies are engaged is the collecting and publishing of the materials bearing on state and national history to be found in the archives of foreign states. The next stage of progress will be the rewriting of our histories so as to include these valuable collections of new source material. The older and more provincial point of view is being gradually abandoned in favor of the more complete and cosmopolitan conception of our place among the nations. Indications are not wanting that this widening horizon is beginning to affect the interpretation of our history. The closer relations which have

been established between this nation and Canada and with the states to the south of us will soon make it necessary to enlarge the chapters dealing with colonial life so as to include the early development of our contemporaries on either side of us. The significant chapter of English discovery and fur-trade extension in the far Northwest after 1763 has quite as much interest for us as for the people most closely associated with it. The French Revolution wrought greater changes on our side of the ocean than our historians have yet been able or willing to incorporate into our history. We have as a rule been content with the petty details regarding Genet's intrigues, east and west, and our diplomatic entanglements with the changing French government, culminating in the purchase of Louisiana. Of the real facts involving Spanish prestige and authority in South America and of the forces that gave England entrance as a dominant commercial factor there, we are often quite ignorant. The perfunctory treatment accorded by the average writer to such questions as the Monroe doctrine or the Oregon boundary dispute is proof positive that we need to widen our fields of study and change our historical outlook. If our historians find it impossible from lack of space to include in our national history the essential facts and the social and political conditions in the adjoining states, then let some enterprising publisher finance a new venture and have written a history of North America. United States has come to be a world power and no longer a provincial state on a remote European frontier. The first experiments at writing national history have not been an unqualified success from any standpoint. When and how are we to begin writing the new history of our nation, a history which shall contain insight as well as organization and which shall at the same time have historical perspective? With such a history for a standard reference work and with its methods and points of view caught up and carried into the common circulation by text books, it would be possible for the humblest of us, for the first time, to orient ourselves properly in the ever-widening circle of international affairs in which we have found a place since our Civil War.

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